



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A remedy for this plight into which our laws have fallen seems to lie in the calling of a constitutional convention, and a general belief that this is the only possible solution is indicated in the fact that both our incoming and retiring governors have recommended that plan to the present legislature. It is gratifying to know that such a course meets the approval of some who speak with authority. Mr. E. L. Godkin, editor of the *Nation*, always conservative and never an optimist, thus characterizes the constitutional convention as a factor in American political development: "Through the hundred years of national existence it has received little but favorable criticism from any quarter. It is still an honor to have a seat in it. The best men in the community are still eager or willing to serve in it, no matter at what cost to health or private affairs. I cannot recall one convention which has incurred either odium or contempt. Time and social changes have often frustrated its expectations, or have shown its provisions for the public welfare to be inadequate or mistaken, but it is very rare indeed to hear its wisdom and integrity questioned. In looking over the list of those who have figured in conventions of the State of New York since the Revolution, one finds the name of nearly every man of weight and prominence; and few lay it down without thinking how happy we should be if we could secure such service for our ordinary legislative bodies."¹

Who shall say that the creation of such a body at this time would not summon to the service of the state many gifted citizens of whose assistance the state is now deprived because present political conditions fail to attract them? If so the result would tend to quicken and regenerate the not too wholesome civic life of our beloved commonwealth, besides facilitating by the removal of obsolete constitutional barriers, that steady improvement in laws and institutions which is the normal tendency of every free and intelligent people.

CHARLES SUMNER LOBINGIER.

Omaha, Neb.

STREET RAILWAY POLICY IN BERLIN.

The city of Berlin is just now in a transition period, so far as its system of street railway lines is concerned. The development is likely to be of extraordinary interest and will attract the attention of the students of municipal government during the next few years.

It will be remembered that the city of Berlin granted extensive privileges to private corporations many years ago for the construction of

¹ Godkin, "The Decline of Legislatures," *Atlantic Monthly* (1897), Vol. 80, pp. 35, 52.

surface roads. These privileges, generally speaking, expire about the year 1905. Nearly ten years ago the demand for replacing horse traction by electric traction became insistent. Smaller cities, notably Halle on the Saale, led the way in this improvement. Berlin lagged behind. It was very evident that the private companies would not introduce electric traction on their own initiative. The pressure for an improvement in local transportation became so great that the city authorities were finally compelled either to buy out the companies under the provisions contained in the contracts or to find some means of persuading them to introduce electric traction. As is usual in such cases, it was found that the cost of purchasing the lines would far exceed the financial ability of the city at the time, and consequently the latter was compelled to come to terms with the street car owners. The latter insisted that they could not afford to introduce electric traction without very substantial compensation on the part of the city. Their concessions would expire before they could hope to reap the profits from the necessary investment of capital. They proposed to introduce the electric power if the city would extend the term of their privileges. After a long discussion, a new contract was made with the more important of these lines—the Great Berlin Street Railway Company, and the New Berlin Horse Railroad Company—on the nineteenth of January, 1898. The following were the more important provisions of this contract: The companies agreed to convert all their horse car lines into railroads with electric traction, and to apply the same to all new lines opened by them during the term of their concession. This conversion of horse traction into electric traction is to be complete within five full years after the signing of the contracts. The general system of traction is that known as the trolley system, but in its place a mixed system of storage battery and trolley may be introduced at any time, upon demand of the city authorities. The electricity is to be obtained from such places as are indicated by the city authorities. The city may insist upon the construction of additional lines whenever the public interest may demand it, and in such places as it may determine, to the amount of 150 kilometres, and the tracks of these companies may be used by other companies chartered by the city for the distance of 400 metres. The companies bound themselves to erect waiting rooms at the ends of their lines and at the various stopping places, which shall be warmed and lighted, these stations to be erected upon demand of the city. Motormen and conductors are not to be employed for more than ten hours per day. Three years after the conclusion of this contract the companies shall reduce their price of transportation for a single, unbroken trip, along the whole length of their lines, both within and without the city

limits, to a uniform price of ten pfennigs (2.38c.) The companies shall provide a pension system for their employes. They shall pay to the city for the use of city property 8 per cent of their gross income from transportation of persons and goods, and whenever the net return of the enterprise shall exceed 12 per cent of the present capital stock or 6 per cent upon any additional capital employed in extending the lines, the half of the excess profit shall be paid into the city treasury. The contracts shall run to the thirty-first of December, 1919. At the end of the contract the lines and rolling stock of the companies shall pass into the possession of the city of Berlin, without any remuneration whatever.

It will be seen that this forms a very liberal contract to the city, as such contracts go, but, in spite of that fact, the action of the city in closing this contract has been severely criticised, and the city is now drawing up an extensive plan of additional lines, making a network comprising nearly as many kilometres of track as the present system, which is to be built and operated by the city on its own account. This will not compete directly with the existing lines, but will of course have a decided influence upon their policy, as it will affect materially their possibilities of profit, in case they do not pursue what the public considers a reasonable policy. It is felt that if the city constructs and operates its own system, it will acquire the necessary experience to take over the existing lines when the concession expires in the year 1920.

It is interesting to note that nearly all students of municipal government in Europe consider that the acquisition of these semi-monopolistic enterprises, like gas, water, electricity, local means of transportation, etc., is absolutely necessary, if the cities in the future are to be able to provide the funds necessary to meet the steadily increasing demands upon the municipal funds.

In the matter of street railway transportation in Berlin, the inconvenience of the present situation is certainly very great. Many of the old horse cars are still in use and consequently over extensive lines in the central portion of the city the speed is limited by that of the horse car. But over half of the entire mileage and the rolling stock has now been converted into the electric system and probably the reconstruction of the entire system will be completed within the year, when the city will have a fairly successful and satisfactory system of local street transportation.

It is rather an interesting fact that the citizens of Berlin are very indignant over what they consider gross neglect on the part of the street car companies in the performance of their functions. This has gone so far that a general meeting was called recently by all people

who had reason to complain of failure in the street car service, of failure to run cars frequently enough, of failure to provide a sufficient number of cars, of failure to warm the cars adequately, etc., for the purpose of forming a general association of citizens to safeguard the interests of the community over against the street car companies. Its object is to stir up the municipal administration in such a way as to compel it to force the street car companies to carry out their agreements with the city ; from which it will be seen that public administration, even in Germany, requires the same sort of stimulation from private parties that it does in the United States.

EDMUND J. JAMES.

University of Chicago.